raw material costs during this period and growing demand. In a competitive market, steel producers adjust their prices depending on market conditions.

(d) In a liberalised environment the Government does not intervene directly in the market to influence prices. However, the Government, through its policy initiatives, has taken several steps to ensure availability of steel and stablise the price in the domestic market which *inter-alia* include the following:-

(i) reduction in customs duty on non alloy steel from 25% to 10%

(ii) reduction in customs duty on alloy steel from 25% to 15%.

(iii) abolition of 4% Special Additional Duty (SAD) on imports.

(iv) lowering of excise duty on steel items from 16% to 12%

(v) substantial increase in the allocation of steel items, during 2004-05, for supply to the SSI units under the Small Scale Industries Corporations (SSIC) scheme.

The Government is carefully monitoring the price situation and all necessary steps will be taken to help ensure stability in prices in the future.

Improving Condition of Shepherds

*267. SHRI K.B. KRISHNA MURTHY: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have received any proposal from the Karnataka Government for improving the condition of shepherds under a special scheme drawn up by the Karnataka Sheep and Wool Development Corporation;

(b) if so, the estimated cost of the proposal;

(c) the details of the expansion plans, etc; and

(d) the present status of the above proposal?

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SHARAD PAWAR): (a) to (d) Government of Karnataka has sent proposals from time to time for assistance in development of Sheep and Wool. Proposals have been received in February, '03, October, '03 and March, 2004.

The proposal received in February, 03 for a Technology Mission at a project cost of Rs. 4684.40 lakh, over a period of five years, requested for extensive assistance in sheep husbandry including purchase of rams and ewes, disease control, health care, improvement in nutritional status, strengthening of extension centres, publicity, information and training, marketing assistance, monitoring and evaluation.

The project sent in October, '03 proposed revival at a cost of Rs. 36.00 lakh of a Wool Analysis Laboratory, set up at Renebennur Taluk of Haveri district of Karnataka with assistance received in 1997-98 from the Central Wool Development Board and revival of Wood Processing facilities for scouring, processing and product manufacturing. The proposal requested Centre to share 2/3rd of this cost.

Two proposals received in March, 2004 to cover Chitradurg and Belgaum Taluks and districts at a cost of Rs. 74.26 and Rs. 77.30 lakhs respectively till the end of the 10th Plan sought assistance for improving the breed of the sheep, health care and mortality ratio, mutton production, quantity of wool etc. under the Integrated Wool Improvement Programme (IWIP).

The proposals have been examined by the Central Wool Development Board in relation to the wool sector schemes being administered by it, and the budgetary availability of Rs. 40.00 crores in the 10th Five Year Plan in the sector.

The proposal sent in February, '03 was scaled down and a sanction for covering 50,000 sheep with central assistance of Rs. 8.15 lakhs in accordance with the scheme for Integrated Sheep & Wool Development Programme (ISWDP) was issued in March, 2003.

The proposal of October, 2003 regarding revival of Wool Analysis and Wool Processing facilities could not be sanctioned as Central Wool Development Board had already extended assistance for setting up the Wool Analysis Centre. The Central 10th Plan scheme administered by the Central Wool Development Board did not cover any of the other components proposed for assistance.

As regards the proposal sent in March, 2004, by concentrating only in sheep husbandry inputs and neglecting all issues connected with intensifying the inputs and organizational efforts for the marketing of wool in order to increase the returns to the wool producers, it did not meet the objectives of the central sector scheme of Integrated Wool Improvement Programme. The objectives of the Central Sector Scheme have been discussed at a review meeting on the Wool Sector held by the Ministry of Textiles on 02.06.04 with all State Secretaries of Sheep/Animal Husbandry Department, at which the representative of State Government of Karnataka was informed of the requirement and objectives of the Central Sector Programme. A revised proposal from State Government for providing assistance for consultancy, value addition and processing of the coarse Deccani wool is awaited.

Condition of Blood for Blood

†*268. SHRIMATI SAVITA SHARDA: Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that a large number of patients are dying in the country because of the condition of giving blood for blood;

(b) if so, whether Government would consider not to apply this condition of giving blood for blood in the cases of serious patients in order to save their lives; and

(c) the units of blood required every month in Delhi together with the total quantum of blood collected through the blood donation camps?

THE MINISTER OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (DR. ANBUMANI RAMADOSS): (a) to (c) Blood is an essential component of the body which provides sustenance to life. Blood cannot be manufactured in a factory. It can only be collected from a human being and transfused to those in need. Blood can be collected either from a voluntary, replacement or professional donor. The practice of professional blood donation has been banned in India from 1st January, 1998, subsequent to the Supreme Court judgement on this issue. Presently, the requirement of blood is met by a voluntary or a replacement donor. Since there is almost always a shortage of blood from voluntary blood donors, blood banks often insist

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.